

# Two Poems

Robert Hedin

## THEY WHO LOVED THE SMELL OF BURNING

On the second day they started in  
Again, this time on the livestock,  
And whatever they saw they killed,  
And whatever they killed they left  
Where it fell. On the third it rained,  
But the morning broke clear, so  
They decided to take on the villagers.  
First the newborn, then the old ones,  
The ones who would remember.  
They took them out into the field.  
One shot to the back of the head.  
On the fourth they woke early,  
And by the time the sun was barely  
Over the trees, they'd already  
Poisoned the wells, the cisterns.  
But mostly they burned. They loved  
The smell of burning. They burned  
The crops, the vineyards, then torched

The forests. They burned all day  
And into the next. They burned  
Until there was no shade,  
Nothing but smoking charcoal  
And dead trees. Then they erased  
The maps and renamed the villages.  
This one Cinder, this one Ash.

## OFF NEWFOUNDLAND

We were two days out in the cold waters  
Off Newfoundland, hauling in the last  
Of our lobster pots, when we heard high up  
The unmistakable beating of engines.  
And there, nosing down out of the clouds,  
Was the *Hindenburg*, pride of the Nazis.  
And we all stood back, marveling at how  
Beautiful it was, how buoyant, shining  
Like some bright summons in the evening sky.  
Then it dipped its great prow in salute,  
And sailed on, and left us there with big swells,  
Lightning, black clouds massed at the horizon.

**Robert Hedin's** most recent books include *At the Great Door of Morning: Selected Poems and Translations* (Copper Canyon Press) and, as co-editor, *The Uncommon Speech of Paradise: Poems on the Art of Poetry* (White Pine Press). He lives in Frontenac, Minnesota.